

By Reason Of Use

Maturing Beyond Spiritual Childhood

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We will begin this sermonette by reading to Hebrews 5:11.

Hebrews 5:11-12 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

These were stinging words that Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians and he was trying to shake them from their spiritual lethargy. He called them “spiritually retarded”; “babies”; “dull of hearing.” They need to be taught again what the first principles were. What are these “first principles” and how would it affect their spiritual condition?

Well today, the purpose of this sermonette is to show you how applying these “first principles” can help us to grow spiritually.

I met a man last night named Clarence; he is a Hebrew Christian. He should be a teacher, he knows the Bible, he has heard it for years, but there is a missing ingredient. If he had that missing ingredient, he would be a teacher, but right now he is a “spiritual babe,” he still needs milk. He is not able to digest “meat” yet. Now look at verse 13.

Hebrews 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

So Clarence is unskillful in the words of righteousness, in the use of God's Word, because he only uses “milk.” He uses God's Word to look at others and look at others and their sins, considering himself righteous and thinks that he does not need to study much further than that. So his ears are “dull of hearing” God's words here. Verse 14 tells us a little more here.

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Well, Clarence does not apply the “first principles” to God's Word when he uses it and so he does not exercise his senses and use it with the understanding that God gives us through the “first principles.” Notice, paraphrasing verse 12, he knew the first principles, but he has become a spiritual babe.

The phrase in verse 14 caught me and in making this sermonette I thought that it is the same thing Satan said to Eve, “You will be like gods and you will know good and evil.” So his solution was disobey God and do it your way, and experience life as you want to, then you will be like gods and you can say what is good and evil.

But God's solution is to look at His words through the “first principles” and by “reason of use,” meaning by applying these words and principles over and over again in our lives, you will experience the joy of doing it right, the consequences of doing it wrong, and you will have your senses exercised to know good and evil, and over a period of time you will learn.

Now what are these “first principles” and where can we find them? Please turn to Matthew 22. We could not have any greater example than Jesus Christ Himself and we see His example and words here.

Matthew 22:35-40 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Now the man was a lawyer, and he was trying catch and trap Jesus, so his motive in using the Word was not a skillful use, it was to trap Christ and to make Him look foolish in the eyes of the other people. So Jesus answered his

question, but He also added a second commandment: “love your neighbor as yourself.” Because this is one thing that the Pharisees did not really do. They put heavy burdens on people, and they would not lift their fingers to help. So this was a characteristic of the lawyers.

He included everything, He said *all* the law and *all* the prophets are summed up in these two principles: love God and love your neighbor. So those are the two principles. Now let us look at Jesus' words.

John 14:10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”

He prayed often. Great time He spent in communication with God. He loved God with all His heart and soul and His mind. He knew God's Word thoroughly; in fact, He *was* God's Word. He had compassion on all of humanity, even compassion when He rebuked them. But His way was to apply these first two principles: “love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.”

And because He did this, His senses were exercised and He suffered the abuse of words and grumblings and oppositions. He suffered physical hardships and many other things. And as we heard through this Feast, he prayed “Abba Father, let this cup pass from Me.” He felt the weight of what He was going to do and He knew that He was to sacrifice His life for all humanity and He was willing to do this, “not My will but Yours be done.”

He learned through His suffering as we are told in this same chapter of Hebrews. He learned obedience through His suffering and that is what we are called to do, to learn obedience through our suffering. Many of us are suffering, maybe not physically but spiritually inside, as I have heard it expressed as “sorrow of heart.” But we can consider our suffering, as we have heard this Feast, our suffering is an investment and if we do it correctly and with the right principles then we are giving a light to others and they can see what we do.

We are learning things that are going to carry over to the resurrection, and we can be a part of the Bride of Christ, with our wedding garments on, able to help other people learn this beautiful and wonderful way of life.

But what about us? If we love God with all our hearts and minds, and love our neighbors as ourselves, will we not be animated, on fire with a passion for God, with a passion for understanding His way of life? Will we not set up a daily appointment to talk with Him in prayer and to study His Word and find out as much as we can about Him? And will we not love our neighbor where we want to apply these principles?

How can God's Word teach us better to love our neighbor, the physical human beings around us?

Turn to Psalms 1, verses 1-3. This to me is what I think a man should do. It describes a man who uses God's Word skillfully and a man who loves God with all his heart and loves his neighbor as himself.

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. [I love this because it is a promise, because if we do these things] He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

What a promise! When we suffer we might not think that this is happening, but we know that this is a promise of God and it does not happen on our schedule because we understand God's Word and we understand His idea of what is good and what is evil.

Now I want to paraphrase this same scripture and relate it to some of the things we have heard and some of the conditions that we are in:

Blessed and happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the rich and famous of this Babylonian society; who does not adopt the customs in speech and fashions of this adulterous, self-seeking,

pleasure seeking culture; who does not scorn and judge God by his circumstances in life or the actions in what he observes in the lives of other people. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, he reads it and applies the first principles of the oracles of God in the way that he uses God's Word. His ears will not be dull of hearing, but with each new truth and old truth, which is reviewed before him, it will be a fresh treasure to him and will give him better insight into the character and mind of God and help him to see his own sins and mature spiritually. In time he will bring forth fruit which reflects his love for God and his fellow man.

God wants us to apply the “first principles” in our lives and through their use, become like Him.

Now I want you to sing with me the first verse of Psalms 1 that is in our hymnal, and I want you to think about the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly and the promises that God gives to him for applying the first principles.

“Blessed and happy is the man who does never walk astray, nor with the ungodly men stands in sinners way. All he does prospers well, but the wicked are not so; they are chaff before the wind, driven to and fro.”